

[Barre Montpelier Times Argus editorial](#)

Rep. Peter Welch leapt on news in a Wall Street Journal story Thursday that the House Republican leader was seeking contributions from Wall Street bankers in exchange for protecting executive bonuses.

House Minority Leader John Boehner reportedly made his appeal over drinks with James Dimon, chairman of J.P. Morgan. Boehner claimed that Republicans had resisted President Obama's efforts to rein in executive pay and to impose new regulations, according to the Journal, and he said he was disappointed that Democrats were still receiving abundant donations from Wall Street.

Welch continues to push a bill for a bonus tax, and Obama has his own plans for taxing big banks. The Wall Street Journal story, meanwhile, gives the Democrats ample grounds for continuing their new offensive against business-as-usual Republicans.

Welch has become an active player in the Democrats' efforts to push their initiatives forward in Congress. On Thursday he was part of a conference call on reforming the congressional budget process, along with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, former President Clinton and others.

On the offensive is where the Democrats need to be if they are to succeed in pushing important initiatives through Congress. Vice President Joe Biden has been enlisted in the effort, as described in a column by E.J. Dionne of The Washington Post.

Biden had sat down with Dionne to talk about the economic recovery, but Dionne touched a nerve when he asked Biden about "the surprise applause line" in Obama's State of the Union address. The line: "I do not accept second place for the United States of America."

Biden launched into an attack on Republicans and others who are holding the nation back by refusing to take on the challenges that will put the nation in a position to compete: infrastructure

improvements, energy innovations, education reform, health care reform, banking reform.

Obama's push to make the nation competitive with China, Europe, India and others "is not about old-fashioned Democratic spending," Dionne concluded. "It's about competing successfully, investing to maintain American economic leadership. John F. Kennedy provided a slogan for such an effort 50 years ago: 'Let's get America moving again.'"

Welch has made himself part of that effort. On Boehner's bid to cozy up to Wall Street, Welch said, "We must focus on creating jobs, reforming our broken health care system and restoring our economy — not protecting the Wall Street bankers who pushed our economy off a cliff last year."

The revived Democratic attack is not some sort of inchoate populism, rabble with pitchforks rushing Wall Street. It is a shrewd political strategy for regaining the initiative and showing the nation what the Republicans, as they now constitute themselves, stand for.

In that vein, Obama needs to press home the point that those who are worried about mounting deficits ought to be lining up in support of health care reform. As he has said in the past, the Congressional Budget Office sees health care reform to be a major step toward curbing the cost of Medicare, which is a big driver of prospective deficits.

Obama has started to call the Republicans on their practice of taking both sides of an argument. They supported the creation of a commission on deficit-reduction until Obama decided to back the measure, then they turned against it. In a similar vein, they attacked his efforts to reduce the budget-busting increases in Medicare spending by warning senior citizens of impending cuts in their Medicare benefits.

The deterioration and rebuilding of the Champlain Bridge is a good emblem for where the nation now stands. There is a time to break down and a time to build up. Now it is time to build.